









# Indian Miniatures



INTRODUCTION & NOTES

by

BASIL GRAY

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*TREASURES*  
*OF*  
INDIAN MINIATURES  
*in the*

BIKANER PALACE COLLECTION

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# INTRODUCTION

*by*

*BASIL GRAY*

Romance has long attached to the treasuries of the Indian princes, supposed to contain fabulous wealth in gold and gems. Whatever truth there may be behind these stories, their palaces do undoubtedly hold many objects of art of unknown beauty and interest.

From time to time some of these treasures have been lent to exhibitions, for instance to one in Delhi in 1911 on the occasion of the Durbar; and again in 1947-8 at the Royal Academy in London. But these loans only touched the fringes of these accumulations, and there is far more which still remains unknown.

It should be realised that these princely houses are of very varied origin and antiquity. The greater number date only from the break-up of the Mughal Empire which followed so soon after the death of the Great Mughal Aurangzeb in 1707. After the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah in 1739 the empire was little more than a name, and even before this date many areas were virtually independent. When, some sixty years later, the British succeeded the Marathas as the dominant power in north India, all these various Rajas entered into treaty relations with them and were all given equal status though of course varying greatly in size and importance.

The Rajput states and their Rajas claim a far greater antiquity, and indeed their traditions reach back to medieval times. They are the representatives of ancient clans whose honour it was to uphold some remnants of Hindu Civilization when the land was covered, during the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, by successive waves of Moslem invaders, Turks, Mongols and Persians. Although the borders of some of these Rajas were as large as those of some European states, their capitals were market-towns built about a fortress-palace, and their resources as modest as would be expected in a society in which the aristocratic exercises of war and hunting were alone pursued. The main centres of Indian civilization were never there any more than the main centres of population. But they upheld the traditions of a feudal India down to our times.

When they were able these princes built Hindu or Jain temples, but these did not at all compare with the great temples of the medieval kingdoms of north and central India which had passed away—It is unlikely that they ever supported any considerable schools of architecture or of wall-painting—But Rajputana though poor in much, is well-supplied with building stone and marble, and their lands provided superb sites for fortresses, like the akropoleis of ancient Greece or the hill-towns of Italy. It is in these that the famed treasures of the Rajputs are reputed to be preserved, although the present ruler, as at Jaipur, may inhabit a palace in the plain below.

Among these states Bikaner is not one of the most ancient, nor has it ever been one of the most powerful—But its reigning house is of the blood of the Rathors of Jodhpur, from whose wide lands of Marwar it was carved by a junior branch when the city of Bikaner was founded in 1465. Its territory was the northern and poorer part of these lands, stretching into the desert, and also at the extreme limit of the Rajput area. Its early history was checkered and uncertain, and it might not have survived at all if Raja Rai Singh (1571-1611) had not married his daughter, in 1586, to Prince Salim, son of the emperor Akbar by a Rajput princess of Jaipur. This alliance, and Rai Singh's acceptance of military rank in the Mughal army, are of great importance also in the cultural history of Bikaner. For they brought her into contact with the most alive and active centre of Indian civilization at that time. At the Mughal court were gathered the writers, musicians, architects and painters whom Akbar had attracted from all northern India, as well as the Deccan, Kashmir, Persia, and even Transoxiana.



There is no reason to think that there was any tradition of painting at Bikaner before this time. In Southern Rajputana, which was nearer to the rich centres of Gujarat and the Deccan, there was certainly such a tradition, but it was probably confined to the illustration of poetic, religious themes—such illustrations as might be exhibited as an accompaniment to a recitation. Simple designs, bold colour, a clear background and a rhythmic composition were suited to such a purpose; and this is what we find in the surviving paintings on paper, of which the main centre was probably Udaipur. The same tradition lies behind the coloured tile pictures on the outer walls of Raja Man Singh's palace of Gwalior (about 1500) which the emperor Babur admired so much. There was apparently at this time no tradition of paintings as an accompaniment of the bardic chronicles of Rajputana, nor do later portraits of the heroes of these legendary exploits seem to go back to early prototypes.

At Bikaner, at least, it would certainly seem that the idea of portraiture was learned from the Mughal Court, and that Rai Singh imitated the kind of vignette portrait fashionable at the court of his son-in-law Prince Salim, who succeeded his father Akbar in 1604 as the emperor Jahangir. This was a style much influenced by the mature miniature art of Persia, from whence it borrowed the delicate duck's egg coloured background that served so effectively as a foil to the splendid Mughal brocades and jewelry in portraits throughout the seventeenth century, and beyond. There was however a greater interest in character than is ever found in Persia, where portraiture remained at the stage of idealisation, in a medieval tradition.

Rai Singh was absent for long periods from his lands in command of Mughal armies in the Deccan and elsewhere, wherever Akbar was seeking to extend his dominion, with the help of his Rajput feudatories. He was probably present in 1600 when Akbar captured Ahmadnagar, capital of the northernmost of the Moslem states of the Deccan, after the death of the heroic princess Chand Bibi, whose defence so impressed itself on Indian imagination. It cannot therefore be known for certain whether the artist whom Rai Singh brought back with him to Bikaner, to be his court painter, was one of the artists trained in the Mughal imperial atelier; or perhaps one captured at the fall of Ahmadnagar, trained in the Deccani tradition; or if he was content to employ such artists as followed the Mughal armies with an occasional commission.

Certainly portraits were painted; and one of the Raja himself is preserved in the palace collection. A second portrait reproduced here, represents, according to the note on the back, his uncle Raja Bhoj Rathor—(Pl. IV). It is painted in a bolder style and a more vivid palette than was ever employed in Persia; and the strong outline of the silhouette it owes to the older tradition of India. This could be found in friezes of dancers and musicians in late medieval wall and ceiling-paintings. Such a traditional style was one of the elements which went to the making of the new Mughal style during its formation in the sixteenth century under Akbar. It is therefore possible that Nur Muhammad, painter of this portrait, might as well have been an artist of the imperial court as one whom Rai Singh had found in the Deccan and attached to his person. The Raja's high rank in the imperial service made him an acceptable patron.

Dr. Hermann Goetz, who has had the wonderful opportunity of going through the six thousand paintings preserved in the Bikaner palace collection, reports that there is no evidence for the existence of a school of painting in the state before the latter part of the seventeenth century. In the collection are two striking portraits of Raja Anup Singh (1669–1698), both in a thoroughly up-to-date Mughal style. When he succeeded as a young man of twenty-one, the fanatically orthodox Moslem emperor Anrangzeb had turned upon his Rajput dependants the hard face of a persecutor, and had deposed Anup Singh's father Karan Singh and caused the assassination of his brother Mohan Singh. By 1690 however, the date of these two portraits, the realities of the political situation had obliged him to relax his measures against the Hindus, and Anup Singh spent the decade from 1680 to 1690 campaigning in the Deccan with the imperial troops. When the campaign was over, he became Governor of southern Bijapur until his death in 1698. He must certainly, during these years, have spent some time at Bikaner, where he carried out building



operations, and wherever he might be he concerned himself with Sanskrit literature, and patronised poets; and he also collected works of art.

By this period, for anyone who had moved in Mughal imperial circles, the only possible style of painting was the Mughal style. This must not be thought of as a foreign manner; it was a truly Indian style, originating from the vision with which its founder, the great emperor Akbar, had set out to form a new synthesis of the cultures of all his subjects. It reflected the energy of his enquiring spirit, and was receptive of European, as well as Persian and Indian stylistic invention. They acted and reacted on one another, just as Flemish and Italian painting acted and reacted; while the highly sophisticated landscape style of the Mannerists which resulted, with its artificial arrangement in planes, was known in India through engravings and was adopted as a convention in the landscapes of the Mughal school. All over northern India this style was current by the end of the seventeenth century, except in remote areas of the hills. It was employed with more or less skill and understanding; but it had set a standard which was maintained for the next generation. Far more than has hitherto been realised there ruled throughout the Mughal areas of India a unified painting style, which was made possible by the constant interchange between the Mughal court and the local courts of the Rajputs.

It would not under these circumstances be likely that the portraits painted for the Bikaner Rajas should be very original—The wonder is, rather, they should have as much vitality as they have. They far surpass in finish the contemporary portraits made for the ruling house of the far older and more important state Udaipur, which look like provincial imitations made by an artist who had never left his native place. Anup Singh must have been a patron of discrimination. He also shewed an unusual breadth of vision in collecting and preserving old paintings in several very different styles—Deccani and Rajput—which have hardly been appreciated since until our own generation. For internal evidence as well as historical records suggest that Anup Singh was the real founder of the Bikaner palace collection. It seems unlikely that there can have been much in the palace before his time except a few family portraits. There is no reason to suppose the existence of a local school of painting. Yet there are in the collection to-day several series of paintings of the most popular Hindu subjects, illustrating the Vaishnavite *Bhagawata—Purana*, or the rhetorical anatomy of love called *Rasikapriya* (Pls. VI, VII), which must have been produced early in the 17th century somewhere in Rajputana. It is not impossible that Rai Singh may have acquired some of these, but it would be hard to maintain this without more positive evidence than is at present forthcoming, against the more plausible view that they were brought to Bikaner by Anup Singh, whose interest in art and letters is well known. Some *Ragmala* paintings (cf. Pls. I, II), which must have been painted a hundred years before his time and have appeared by then very old-fashioned, bear on the reverse notes that they were obtained at Adoni, the southern capital of Bijapur state, which he captured in 1689 at the head of the imperial troops at the end of the Deccan war which saw the final extinction of Bijapur.

That Anup Singh should have appreciated such “primitives” is not inconsistent with his having commissioned a series of illustrations to the *Rasikapriya* painted in full Mughal style, between the years 1687 and 1692, and now preserved in the palace collection—It is true that if these had not carried dates on the back they would have been ascribed hitherto to a rather later date; but it is one of the interesting conclusions, which follow from a study of the Bikaner collection, that the strong wave of Mughal influence is to be placed in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, rather than in the second quarter of the eighteenth.

The precise dates rest upon the evidence of these annotations found on the reverse of many of the miniatures. Although portraits dated in this way are known in other state collections, at Jodhpur and Udaipur for instance, these are the first dates to be found on drawings in series. A few precious colophons survive to suggest that it was probably the practice for the artist to sign and date his work at the end of a series; so little, however, have these collections of the Rajput states been studied at present that no conclusion is justified simply from the negative evidence at



present available. The existence of these endorsements at Bikaner should rather encourage a careful scrutiny of other treasuries in search of similar dates, which may put our knowledge of Indian painting on a much more secure and wider basis of ascertained fact.

Meanwhile it is right to exercise caution in the face of the evidence at Bikaner. The endorsements provide a series of dates from the late seventeenth century until the early years of the nineteenth, and the names of a number of painters, all of them Moslem. This is a remarkable, but not an astonishing fact. We have long been familiar with the state of affairs in the Mughal library where the greater number of the painters were Hindus, but where the individual styles were not in any way influenced by this fact. It is easy to see why the first Bikaneri court painters under Anup Singh would have been likely to have been Moslems. The long persistence of such names does suggest a hereditary descent; but for this there is no internal evidence. In fact the one or two patronymics recorded in the endorsements do not support it. But it was certainly the common practice of the time for son to follow father in his trade, and there are numerous examples among the painters at the Mughal court. The epithet or title *USTAD* attached to these names in the endorsements suggests such a continuity. The word means in Persian *Master*, and is the name given by the Mughal emperors to their best painters. It is just the kind of epithet likely to have become stereotyped as a title in a Rajput court of this period. Long after all real political dominance had passed from the Mughal house, the Rajput Rajas regarded it as the sole fount of honour, to which they applied for titles themselves as late as 1800.

Only one of these dated ascriptions is to be reckoned as a true artist's signature, that on the face of a hunting picture of Anup Singh and his three brothers. This is in Persian and is signed by the artist Rashid and dated Samvat 1750, equivalent to A.D. 1693. It is an elaborate and accomplished picture which stands in the descent from the great Mughal durbar and processional scenes; and could only have been painted by an artist directly trained in that tradition. It may perhaps be adapted from a pre-existing Mughal painting; for the design was used again at the imperial court in that period of revival in the early eighteenth century, under the emperors Bahadur and Muhammed Shah. Yet it can scarcely have been executed at the Mughal court where the state given in it to Raja Anup Singh could hardly have been tolerated at this time. It will be suggested that the second portrait of Anup Singh, here reproduced (Pl. VIII), is a similar adaptation of a Mughal design. On the back of it is given the name of a second artist, Rukn al-Din, while a third Moslem painter's name is given on the reverse of a portrait of the Raja's brother, Kesri Singh, also reproduced here (Pl. IX). The descriptions of these three drawings are acceptable and almost certainly correct: if they are accepted, there is no good reason for rejecting the ascriptions. If the names were not recorded at the time, it is not easy to see when they are likely to have been added. The names of the subjects of Mughal miniatures are often written on the back; as in the series of portraits in the British Museum album of Ashraf Khan which we know to have been completed in 1662. Here, it is true, the artists' names appear on the face of the miniatures; but it seems likely that Rajput sentiment would have been against giving the artist such prominence. Once the practice of recording the painter's name became established, it is likely to have been continued; and there are in fact similar notes of authorship on paintings in the Bikaner collection as late as the first decade of the nineteenth century.

If an old collection of this kind, formed by a great family, were being studied in a European palace, search would be made in old inventories, as has been done in those of Charles I or of the Hapsburgs. Nothing of this sort seems to be forthcoming at Bikaner; nor, in fact, is any document of the kind known in any Indian or Persian collection; but this does not mean that they were not made, or even that they may not still exist.

Meanwhile the study and publication of a collection like that at Bikaner enlarges our knowledge of two hundred and fifty years of Indian painting. It has, besides, a kind of unity, as has any collection formed by a single princely family. Some miniatures in the collection appear to be relatively recent acquisitions, but all those reproduced here were probably at Bikaner two hundred



years ago. Such a collection does more than throw light on the history of taste; it is also valuable evidence for the cultural and even political history of India; for it mirrors in a subtle way the relation between the imperial court and the Rajas, and even reveals how nearly a unified India came into being under the Mughals before Aurangzeb started on his disastrous course of intolerance and war. It shews thereafter the rebuilding of a local tradition among the Rajputs.

On the aesthetic side the most exciting discovery has been of the *Ragmala* series which has enlarged our knowledge of the early Deccani school. This series, of which two paintings are here reproduced (Pls. I, II), and two others were exhibited at Burlington House in the great exhibition of 1947-8 (Nos. 803-4),<sup>1</sup> is by far the most important evidence which has become known for the primitive phase of this school, and the only example of the treatment in it of purely Hindu subjects. There is, fortunately, no doubt of the generation to which these must be assigned, and the particular union of Persian and South Indian elements is historically well-founded. The result is a series of designs, built up on transecting diagonals, to which the curves and finials of the Moslem architecture form a satisfying counter-movement. The colour harmonies are most unusual and striking, the deep cool blues contrasting with a wide range of strong reds daringly juxtaposed. The line is forceful; yet the drawing is more delicate and assured than in early Rajput work. It may be hoped that the whole of this series will be published on account of its aesthetic as well as its iconographic interest, as the earliest known developed *Ragmala* pictures.

<sup>1</sup> Plate 143 of the Commemorative Catalogue of the Exhibition.



## PLATE I

### DHANASRI RAGINI

*One of a series of illustrations of musical modes.—About 1570.*

It is curious that the series to which this painting belongs should be the earliest known Ragmala series showing the full development of the idea of parallel poem and picture on the same theme of each musical mode. For it was almost certainly produced at a Moslem court in the Deccan. It is however this mixed descent which makes the style of this series so striking in its fusion of the emotional fire of the Indian subject and the decorative quality of the Persian colouring. In the Moslem kingdoms of the Deccan the Islamic art of Persia met the Hindu art of Vijayanagar, the last independent empire of south India. Vijayanagar fell in 1565 before a combination of three Moslem kingdoms, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda which it had tried to play off against each other for years previously. It had been a centre of art and letters, and writers and painters had to seek a new master. Both Ahmadnagar and Bijapur welcomed them. Very little is known of the school of Ahmadnagar, of which an illuminated historical manuscript, which can be dated to 1565–8, now at Poona, is the only certain survivor. Its miniatures shew the same tall and stately females as appear in this Ragmala series, and a similar mixture of blue, orange and yellow, with pink (cf. S. Kramrisch: *Survey of Painting in the Deccan*, 1938, pls. XII and XIII).

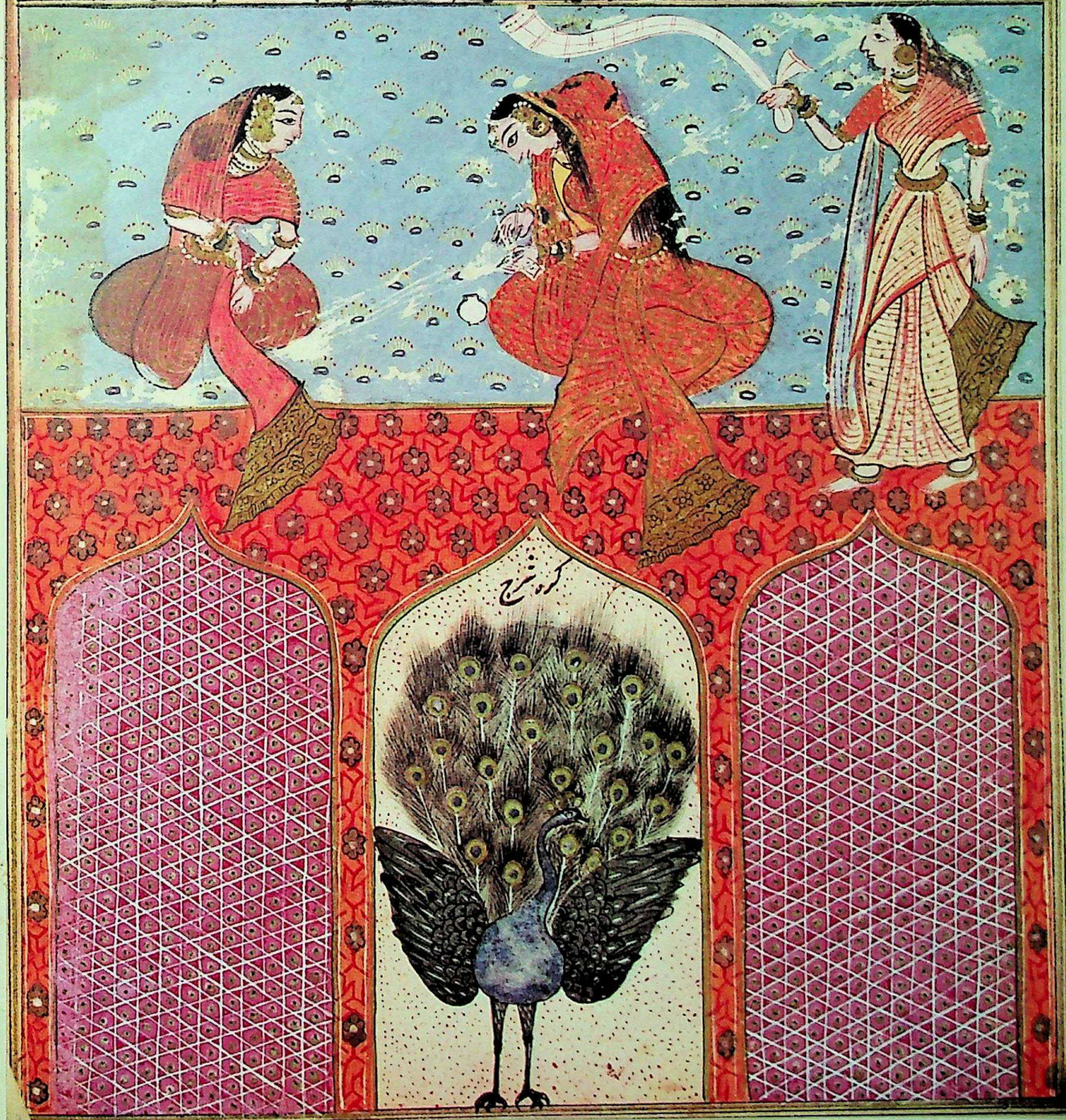
Considerably more is known of the school of painting at Bijapur, where the remains of wall-painting can still be seen in the ruins of the palaces and which has left at least two illuminated manuscripts and a series of royal portraits (cf. pl. III). In this school too, blue is a favourite colour, and both are lavish in the use of gold. These schools do not appear to have differed greatly in style, and, in the circumstances, there is no decisive reason for assigning the Ragmala series to one rather than the other. It must however be recorded that on the reverse of the miniature here reproduced is a note that it was taken as loot from Adoni in 1689—Adoni was the castle in the south of Bijapur of the regent of the kingdom when it fell to the Mughal army commanded by Anup Singh in this year. He served as Governor here until his death in 1698. This circumstance slightly tips the balance in favour of a Bijapuri origin.

The subject is the lady drawing a picture of her absent lover to console her during the time of his absence. She is represented in the mode of Dhanasri as in great distress. The red clothes are referred to in the poem in the label above, and also in another verse on a painting of this same Ragini at Jaipur (cf. O. C. Gangoly, *Rags and Ragini*, pl. LVIII D). Here her complexion is said to be red with grief, "She is weeping and heaving deep sighs"—

The peacock which is so prominent in this painting is not found in other illustrations of the subject, and its position framed in a niche serves to isolate it from the main theme. Its significance is however clear. It frequently appears as a symbol of the time of love at the rains and here with its spreading tail it symbolises the passionate idea of the lover which the lady has. This use of partitions for a symbolic purpose is referred to in the note on the next illustration.



यद्यपि गोरास्मितवक्त्रपद्मश्रीकान्तलिख्यतीथिरहेणहना॥ आपोदुर्गडा नयनो  
दक्षिणोत्तरेणदनिर्भूतकुन्वाधनाश्रीः॥१॥ यित्रीवरसौधतलनिषण्णाववाव  
काठिनिगर्भेनुकाया॥ अलीकसंलापमनोहरागोराश्यास्यनानासहयंमरुते॥





## PLATE II

## KHAN-GHODI RAGINI

*The lady seeking to withdraw from her lover. About 1570.*

This is a second picture from the Ragini series produced at Ahmadnagar or Bijapur about 1570. It is an even more effective painting of highly charged emotion. Here the lovers are together in the Garden of Love, an image which will be familiar to all readers of European medieval poetry or romances. The strongly marked wall shuts out the world. The lovers are alone with their thoughts among the blossoming trees. Their expressionless faces contrast with the eloquence of the gestures, as so often in Asiatic painting; but most appropriately here, where they serve to emphasise the impersonal character of the scene. The figures are types: the lady turns from her lover and his passionate advances to the quiet of her own mind.

The elements of this composition are more Persian than they are in the *Dhanasri* (Pl. I), all except the brilliant orange of the lady's dress which strikes such a violent note in the colour harmony. Flowering trees, plants, architectural background and green ground are all to be found in Safavid painting in Persia, but here these elements are used to build up a composition which perfectly expresses the symbolism. A favourite compositional device in this series is the intersection of diagonals so as to form an arch round the principal figures. It serves as a niche to isolate them. In this miniature it is made into a continuous wall, which clearly sets them apart from the ordinary world as symbols. In later Ragmala series this idea is gradually lost, to the great weakening of their significance and effectiveness. But, throughout the seventeenth century, the figures are set within or immediately in front of a conventional house or pavilion which serves the same purpose. It is a kind of *aediculum* setting them on another plane, a use discussed by Mr. John Summerson in his book *Heavenly Mansions* (1949).



शमन्ययुवतीरुमिनविदिवातदे रुदरतिचिन्विद्वदुमन्कः॥ शय्या  
 नयगमनायमतीदधाना हस्ते धृ ताथभुक्तटीकटि विनेने ॥१॥  
 र भवेत्त परीधाना पीत कंचुकिराजिता काद्योदीरागिणीरुष्टा विमुखीगनु  
 मिउती ॥





## PLATE III

## IBRAHIM ADIL SHAH II OF BIJAPUR

*Reigned 1580–1626. Portrait painted 1590–95.*

There is a peculiar swing and sweeping movement about the Deccani paintings of the Bijapur school at its height which are unmistakable. This is noticeable even in single figures, like the portraits of courtiers in the British Museum<sup>1</sup> and the former India Office library,<sup>2</sup> where the fullness of the skirt spreads out in deep pleats. This amplitude is much more strikingly used in some larger compositions such as the *Siesta*<sup>3</sup> of the Berlin Museum, or the enthronement scene<sup>4</sup> in the Bibliothèque Nationale; but above all in this Bikaner miniature. In all these the principal figure of the ruler forms a centre big enough to have an internal life of its own, while the subordinate figures set up subsidiary rhythms which lap around its contour. Such compositions are more daring than any used by the Mughal school. There is an undoubted tendency towards formalism, especially in the treatment of the drapery folds, but this is needed for its restraint amid the great richness of the palette employed, in which white and gold are used as they are in no other Indian miniatures.

It has already been shewn that Bijapur was the principal heir of the great southern empire of Vijayanagar, where a school of wall painting had kept alive the old Indian tradition of opulent movement. This tradition met at Bijapur the fine draughtsmanship and sumptuous pigments of the early Safavi school of Persia. It is this school which supplies the fine line underlying the Bijapuri miniatures. There is, however, modelling in some of the faces, for instance in the portrait of Ibrahim Adil Shah II in the British Museum, the principal figure in the Berlin *Siesta*, and in one or two of the subordinate figures in the Bikaner picture, and this points to another influence, from the Portuguese settlement at Goa which was in direct touch with Bijapur, some 150 miles inland. This is not however an important formative influence, as European art was a little later in the Mughal school.

Ibrahim II, like other members of the Adil Shahi house, was a patron of art and learning, and himself a musician of some note and a painter "surpassing the best masters". He succeeded in 1580 at the age of nine and reigned until 1626. The British Museum portrait shews him when he was nearer 50 than 40, and is a convincing likeness, with fine and sensitive features. Is the subject of the Bikaner portrait the same, as the inscription on the reverse claims? It can only represent a ruling prince. Muhammad Adil Shah succeeded Ibrahim in 1626 at the age of fifteen. A profile portrait<sup>5</sup> in the British Museum shews him as he was about 1640 at the age of 29—The face is hard and vain and quite unlike the sensitive face of the Bikaner miniature. Stylistically too this belongs to an earlier period than 1630. In spite of the rather different appearance of the nose it seems almost certain that it represents Ibrahim II aged between 19 and 24 and therefore painted between 1590 and 1595.

It is to be noted that the right side of the miniature has been restored from the knee until the upper edge. The upper part of the waving cloth is affected. This object is prominent in several of the Bijapuri miniatures (e.g. those at Berlin and Paris) and also in a wall painting on the vault of the water pavilion at Kumatgi, Bijapur (cf. Kramrisch, op. cit. pl. XIV).

<sup>1</sup> B. Gray: Burlington Magazine, August, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> R. Academy Exhib. of Art fr. India and Pakistan, Comm. Cat. pl. 145 no. 813.

<sup>3</sup> E. Kuehnlel *Islamische Miniaturmalerei*, 1922, pl. 104.

<sup>4</sup> E. Blochet: Les enluminures des manuscrits orientaux, 1926, pl. CIX.

<sup>5</sup> *British Museum Quarterly*, vol. XI, 1937, pl. LIII B.







## PLATE IV

## RAO BHOJ RATHOR

*Uncle of Rai Singh of Bikaner. By Nur Muhammad. Dated 1606.*

The predominant style in this portrait is undoubtedly Deccani; and this requires some explanation. The artist Nur Muhammad might well have worked for Rai Singh for a time after the capture of Ahmadnagar by the imperial troops in 1600. If so, he must have been adaptable; for a comparison with the wholly Deccani portraits of Ibrahim Adil Shah II and his courtiers shews that the style has been a good deal modified to suit Rajput taste. This is most marked in the colouring, which, in the figure, conforms to the palette used in such Rajput paintings as the Bikaner *Rasikapriya* series (Pl. VI, VII). Nur Muhammad has felt the need to reduce the harshness by the employment of a cool monochrome background, while the arched arabesque top is in full Deccani taste. It is less easy to explain why Rao Bhoj should be wearing a Deccani style of accoutrement. Yet the belt and sword-sling, the long *jāmdhar* (dagger) and the ample sash ends are all Deccani fashions. May he have acquired them during the long Deccani campaigns in which Rai Singh had taken part since 1587?

The description on the reverse is in Persian, and it is difficult to reject it, for it fits the period so well, yet would hardly have been likely to have been added later when the subject was entirely forgotten. It should be added that several Mughal portraits exist in various collections, shewing a similar use of a modified Deccani style and Deccani fashions. (e.g. Boston, *Catalogue of the Indian Collections*, VI, No. LXII pl. 29; I. Stchoukine, *Peinture Indienne*, pl. XXIII (b)=Jahangir himself).







## PLATE V

## THE COWHERDS AT BRINDABAN

*An illustration to the Krishna story from the Gita-govinda.*

As the cowherds tend the cows by the bank of the river Jumna, the young Krishna goes off into the groves to sport with the beautiful Radha, one of the millmaids who has come with her companions, bearing a pot on her head, from the town of Mathura. The peacocks and other birds among the trees are rejoicing at the coming of the rains which the streak of lightning in the sky foretells. The birds sing at this joyful season, which is also the time of love.

In this miniature conceptual painting has triumphed over consistency. There is the directness of a child's drawing, in the fitting together of the different parts of the composition, regardless of the scale. The landscape conventions are mostly taken directly from Mughal painting; for instance the scarped bank of the Jumna in the foreground, and the buildings on the horizon with birds in flight above them. Also Mughal are the beautifully drawn cows, but the figures tower above them like giants, while Krishna and Radha are twice represented in what is intended to be the middle distance.

These Mughal landscape elements are in the style of the late Akbar period, so far as can be judged at secondhand—Behind the meaningless, decorative, flutter of the scarves worn by the cowherds is some original, either Deccani or Mughal, and in neither case much later than 1600. In all this ready borrowing from the Mughal there is no trace of any element which belongs to the reigns of Jahangir or Shah Jahan. It must therefore be based on Akbar period models. Compare it for instance—and especially the cows—with the beautiful Mughal painting of Krishna holding up Mount Govardhan to protect his peasant worshippers, which belongs to the Metropolitan Museum, New York,<sup>1</sup> and was lent to the Royal Academy exhibition (No. 873). Even so, there might be a long time-lag between model and copy, as is the case with some late seventeenth century miniatures produced at Basohli, in the western Himalayas, which still shew Jahangiri costumes. Here however the relation to the Akbar models is much closer, and the lateral shape of the picture also points, as is explained below, to an early date. For these reasons the date suggested is not long after 1600.

It is a romantic and pastoral picture; in which the love of Krishna and Radha is subordinated to, or subsumed in, the general sentiment of luxuriant nature. But, since Krishna typifies the love of God, the whole may be thought to reflect his presence in its vibrating radiance.

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in colour in Metropolitan Museum Studies, vol. II, pl. 2, 1930.



॥ मेघम्भे डुरमेवरुनमुवः श्यामासुमालकुमेनैरुतारयश्चमेवतादिमराध  
देवाय ॥ इच्छेनंदनिदेनातशालितयोः अत्यधकुं जडमराधामाधवयोजयिनि  
शमुनाकलेरहः केलयः





## PLATE VI

### DOUBLE ILLUSTRATION TO THE RASIKAPRIYA OF KESAVA DAS

*Above: Radha sending a message to her lover Krishna.*

*Below: Krishna kneeling at her feet.*

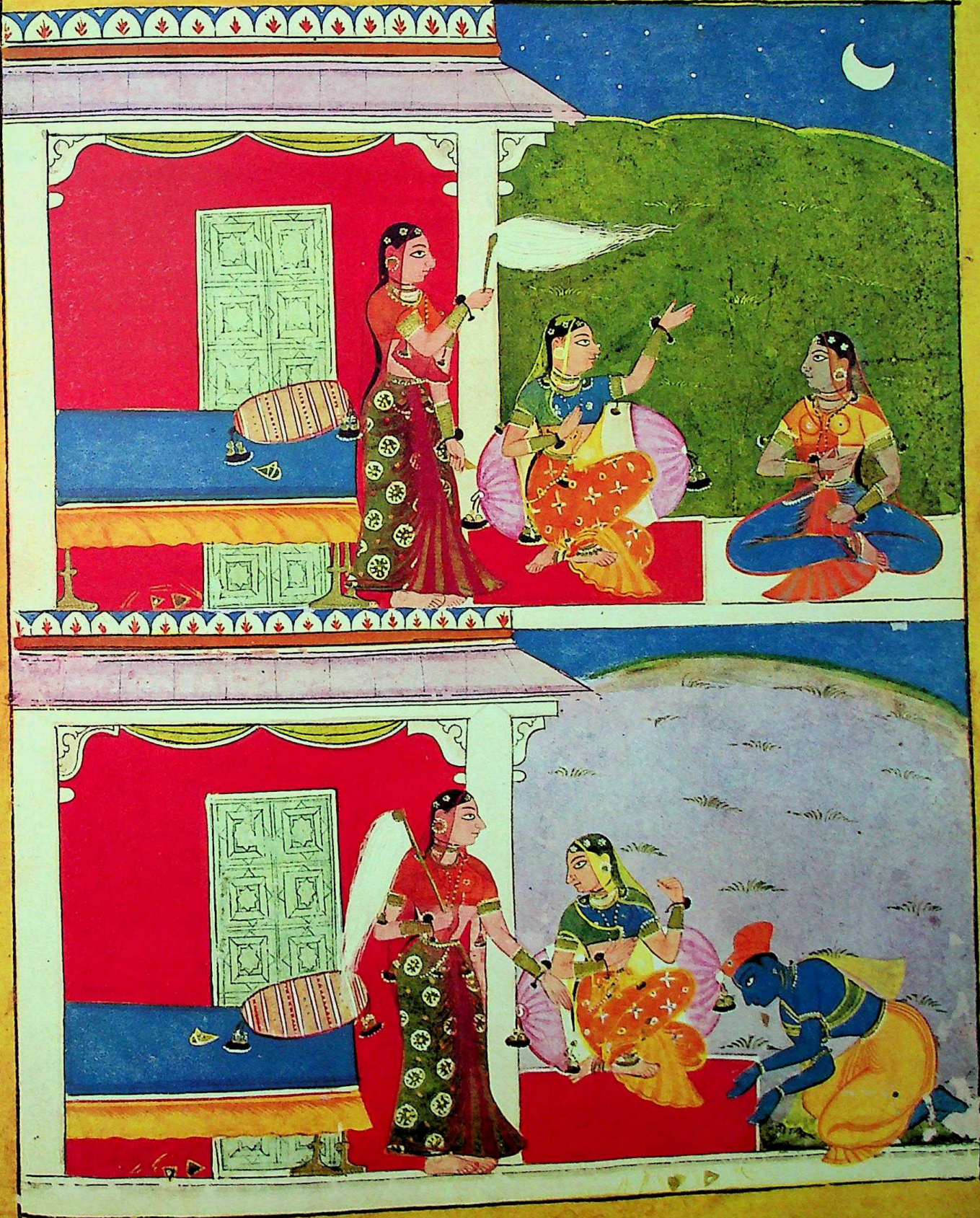
It is moonlight; but, in accordance with the Indian tradition of conceptual representation, perfect visibility prevails. This principle extends so far that the upper surfaces of beds and carpets appear as though seen from a higher view point than the rest of the composition. Such treatment is common in Rajput painting, and is known as "the principle of greatest visibility".

This *Rasikapriya* is, however, not untouched by Mughal influence. The little clumps of vegetation which cover the hillsides are in a convention which originated in Persia: in another painting of the series which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1947-8 (No. 483) Krishna wears Mughal costume, as he does throughout the illustrations of another *Rasikapriya* manuscript, now in the Boston museum and other collections (see Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of the Indian Collections*, vol. VI). Here however Mughal influence is much stronger, and the colouring is the clear cool palette of the early Jahangir period (1604-27), in strong contrast to the glaring colours of the Bikaner series. These are indeed exceptionally strong, and have been taken to indicate a primitive, and therefore very early, phase of this school. But they could not in any case be earlier than 1591 which is the date of composition of the *Rasikapriya*; and in fact such solid backgrounds are constantly employed in Rajput painting throughout the 17th century. More valuable evidence for dating can be obtained from a study of the dress-patterns and hairdressing styles of these miniatures. They are remarkably close to those of the girls in two miniatures illustrating a lyrical Krishna work in prose which are among the finest early Rajput paintings. These are in the Boston Museum (*Catalogue*, vol. V, frontispiece in colour, and *Bulletin*, vol. XXX, 1932, p. 50), and the text at the top of each page is written, as here, on a yellow ground. Language and script point to an area between Gujarat and Rajputana of which Udaipur is the most likely centre. The Bikaner *Rasikapriya* pages may be from the same locality and of about the same date which must be not long after 1600. One indication of the early date of the page reproduced is that it is made up of two oblong compositions, each corresponding to the shape of the first paper manuscripts which retained the approximate proportions of the palm leaf manuscripts which they superseded.

It must be explained that the work illustrated is a technical treatise on prosody suitable for rhetorical compositions on types of love. The situations demand a diagrammatic kind of illustration in which clarity is the first consideration. The gestures are highly expressive and the colouring equally emphatic. It is natural that this result should approach abstract art and it is no accident that rectangular areas of pure colour should be so dominant.



पाइपेरेंडुनप्रीतमत्यौकाहि केसवकैयों डुन मैदीगदीनी तेरीसषीसिषसीषी नरेकउरेष  
 हीकीसिषसीषीजुलिनीः चंदनचंदसमीरसरोजजरे दुषदेहचइसुषहीनीः मेउलटीजु  
 करीविधमोकहन्याइनिहाउलटीविधकानीः॥





# PLATE VII

## AN ILLUSTRATION TO THE RASIKAPRIYA OF KESAVA DAS

*The husband on his return is greeted by his wife.*

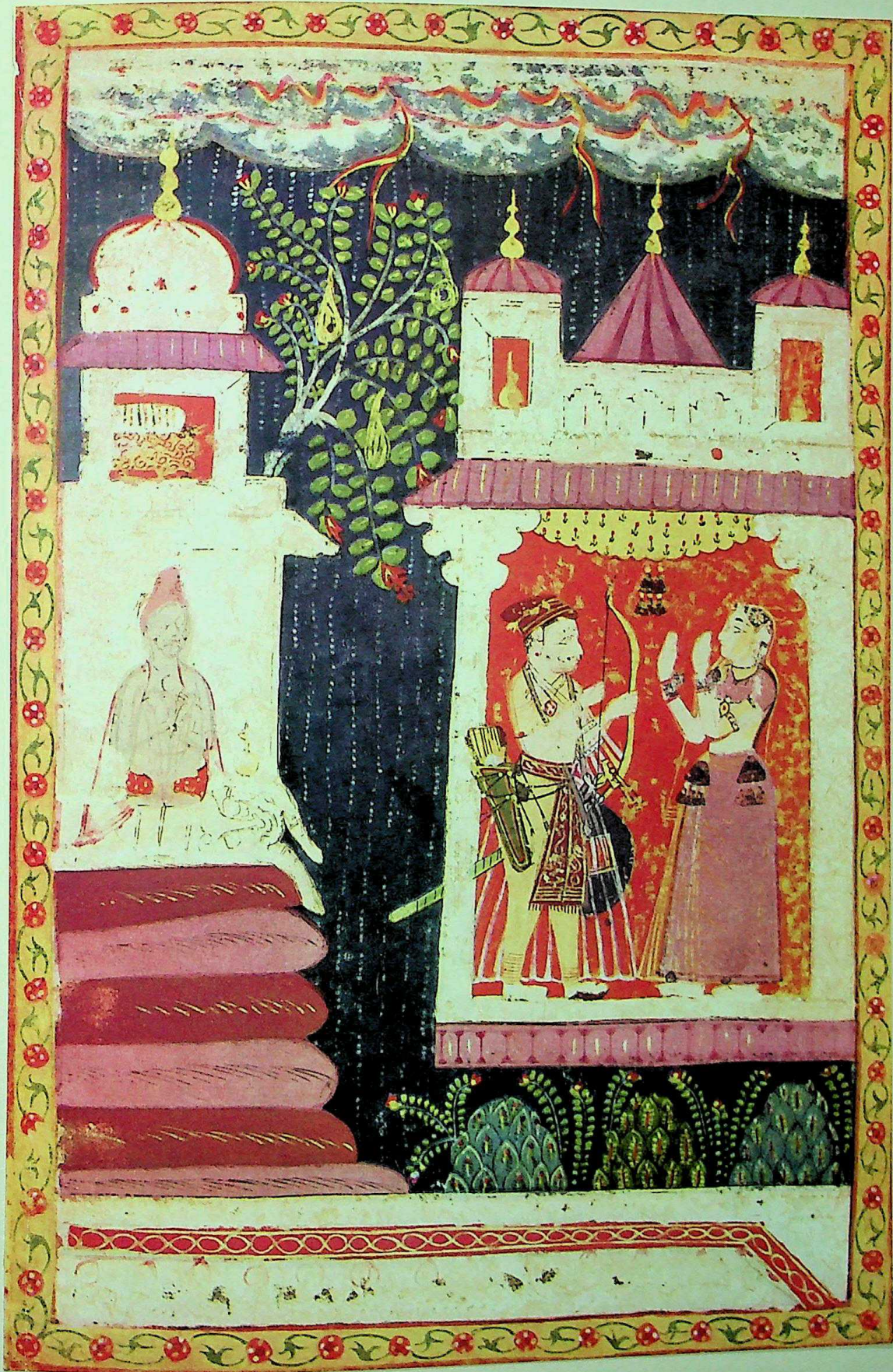
**T**his miniature is more lyrical in feeling than the Deccani Ragmala series (Pl. I and II). The emotional tension is as great but it is more impersonal. The scene has the appearance of a rite with dance movements and the house in which the couple stand serves as a stage to frame and display a dramatic moment instead of as a protective wall in the earlier series.

The fakir seated on his tiger skin inside his hermitage typifies the ascetic devotion of which the lovers' faithfulness is a counterpart; an idea frequently found in the poems which accompany the Rag paintings. It is common in these early Rajasthani pictures to find the sky full of storm clouds, from which vivid lightning strikes and rain falls in large drops, as it does here. These indications of the coming of the rains would convey an immediate idea of the relief which that brings after the long waiting through the hot days, which is paralleled by the lady's long waiting for the coming of her lord. We may recall a passage from one of the Ragmala poems rendered by Coomaraswamy: "Heavy black clouds are joyfully assembled, the sweet melodious rumbling of the thunder is heard, and flashes of lightning light up the sky." (*Portfolio of Indian Art* pl. LXVIII: Madhu—Madhavi).

The present painting carries on the reverse a verse from the Rasikapriya of Kesava Das. There is no reason to think that this painting was made at Bikaner. As explained in the introduction there is no evidence for the practice there of the "primitive" style in which it is painted. Style connects it with a number of Ragmala pictures which agree in the rendering of vegetation, the details of architecture and in the colouring. The best-known of these paintings are two series, of which a number of examples are in the Boston Museum. The double row of tassels hanging from the lady's waist are prominent both in these and in the Bikaner picture, but this lacks the additional large tassels above the elbow. The muslin coat (jama) of the man has a slightly scalloped edge, and he wears a tightly wound pugri on his head. His sword is long and the guard large. In the niches of the pavilion, vessels have been placed as decoration, a fashion which seems to have been introduced from Persia both to the Deccan and to the Mughal court and which had a long vogue ending with the rococo palaces of Europe.

This style originates, so far as we know at present about 1600; but it certainly continued, with little change, almost to the end of the seventeenth century. The dress fashion of the male figure is not found in the earliest series, but can be closely paralleled in one of rather larger size. This is dispersed but one page was lent by Mr. J. C. French to the Royal Academy exhibition (No. 484; Gangoly, pl. 96 D). It dates from about 1690. The style probably originated in Bundelkhand, a rather wild area of central India bordering on Rajputana and culturally connected with it, and the present painting is as likely to be from central India as from Rajputana. It does not however shew the very tall cupolas on the roofs, which Dr. Goetz has suggested as a hall-mark of the Bundela style and which are prominent in the Boston series.







## PLATE VIII

## MAHARAJA ANUP SINGH OF BIKANER (1669-98)

*By Rukn al-Din. About 1690.*

**T**his heroic portrait of the Raja is in the Mughal court style of portraiture, but, since it must have been painted, as will be shewn, about 1690, in a rather old-fashioned style. It was in the reign of Shah Jahan (1627-58) that such rolling clouds and atmospheric mountains as fill the background came into vogue. The court artist who was especially fond of these effects was Bichitr, who was working between about 1620 and 1635. The whole idea was derived from European landscapes, which were probably seen by the Mughal painters in illuminated manuscripts as well as in engravings; and these effects are often accompanied, especially in the work of Bichitr, by angels, cherubs, crowns and all the apparatus of the Baroque religious picture. For instance, Bichitr's portrait of Asaf Khan (the father-in-law of the emperor; d. 1641), now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Stchoukine, *Peinture Indienne*, pl. 38) shews cherubs in the sky above a distant town, beyond which mountains rise. In the Chester Beatty collection is a portrait of the young Emperor himself (*Catalogue*, vol. III, pl. 63), in which Bichitr has been so daring as to borrow not only crown-bearing angels above his head but even a crowd of saints, bearded mullahs, who stand on the clouds as heavenly ministrants, while Shah Jahan is pedestalled on the world, with lion and lamb crouching at his feet. So completely had the idea of the apotheosis been adopted at the Mughal court, with all its symbolism.

By comparison the portrait of Anup Singh is moderate. The only supernatural figures are the shadowy troops, seen above and behind the mountains in the left background, and so effectively recalling the generalship of the Raja. The town behind is no doubt Bikaner itself, with a faintly outlined temple beyond on the left.

The portrait cannot be very far in time from the dated picture of 1693 referred to in the introduction. By 1690 Anup Singh was a hardened campaigner, and the imagery of the portrait would not be inappropriate. Nothing is at present known of the identity of the artist Rukn al-Din, but the skilful execution and the grasp which it shews of the difficult conventions employed, point to his having been trained in the Mughal imperial painting establishment. By the latter part of the reign of Aurangzeb this had been almost dispersed by the intolerance of the emperor; and the artists had found other employment, either with the high officers of the empire, or possibly at the provincial courts of the governors, of whom Anup Singh was one. The stance and setting are conventional, but there is a mastery in their rendering which would allow of the composition being used here for the first time. It is therefore justifiable to look upon it as either a Mughal painting, or the beginning of a Bikaner school. For it has no doubt a local flavour, just as the English works of van Dyck or of Holbein have an English flavour.







## PLATE IX

## RAJA KESRI SINGH

*Attacked by a lioness while hunting. By Ustad Muhammad Rafik. About 1700.*

**K**esri Singh was a younger son of Maharaja Karan Singh (1631–69) and brother of Anup Singh (1669–98). He was noted for his gigantic stature. The date of his birth is unknown but it cannot have been long after 1650. In the hunting group of 1693 he appears in maturity, and the present portrait is not likely to be very much later.

The artist's name is given on the reverse as Ustad Muhammad Rafik. Here we have to do with an artist who uses a modified Mughal style. The idea of this kind of heroic portrait is Mughal, and parallels can easily be found among the work of the imperial court artists, with whom royal hunting groups were always popular. A similar heroic pose with prancing horse occurs in a mid seventeenth century miniature of a Mughal prince shooting arrows at a prostrate lioness which is now in the Gulistan Museum, Teheran (*Athar e-Iran*, II, p. 267, fig. 109). The landscape here includes tall grasses similar to those in the portrait of Kesri Singh, and a rocky hill occupies nearly half the background of this landscape also. A comparison with the Bikaner miniature shews, however, how far the artist, Muhammad Rafik, has departed from the Mannerist landscape convention which had been current at the Mughal court and is used in the portrait of Anup Singh. He has suppressed the distant view and closed his horizon with clumps of grasses which are totally out of scale with the trees in front of them. The heavy rain clouds form a conventional curtain from which conventional rain falls, almost as in the pure Rajput paintings. In other words the Mughal influence is less or the Rajput more, whichever way one chooses to regard it.

At this time that can only mean that the painter was not in sympathy, by training or taste, with the full Mughal idiom, but was still impressed with the models of Mughal portraiture which he must have known. Their realism repelled him but their nobility attracted him. The simplification of the planes as compared with Mughal compositions allows the pattern of the design to tell fully, and the beauty of line of the animals' bodies its clear expression. It is curious how this generalisation and suppression of detail immediately recall the ancient art of the Assyrian reliefs and especially the famous lion hunt of Ashurbanipal in the British Museum.







## PLATE X

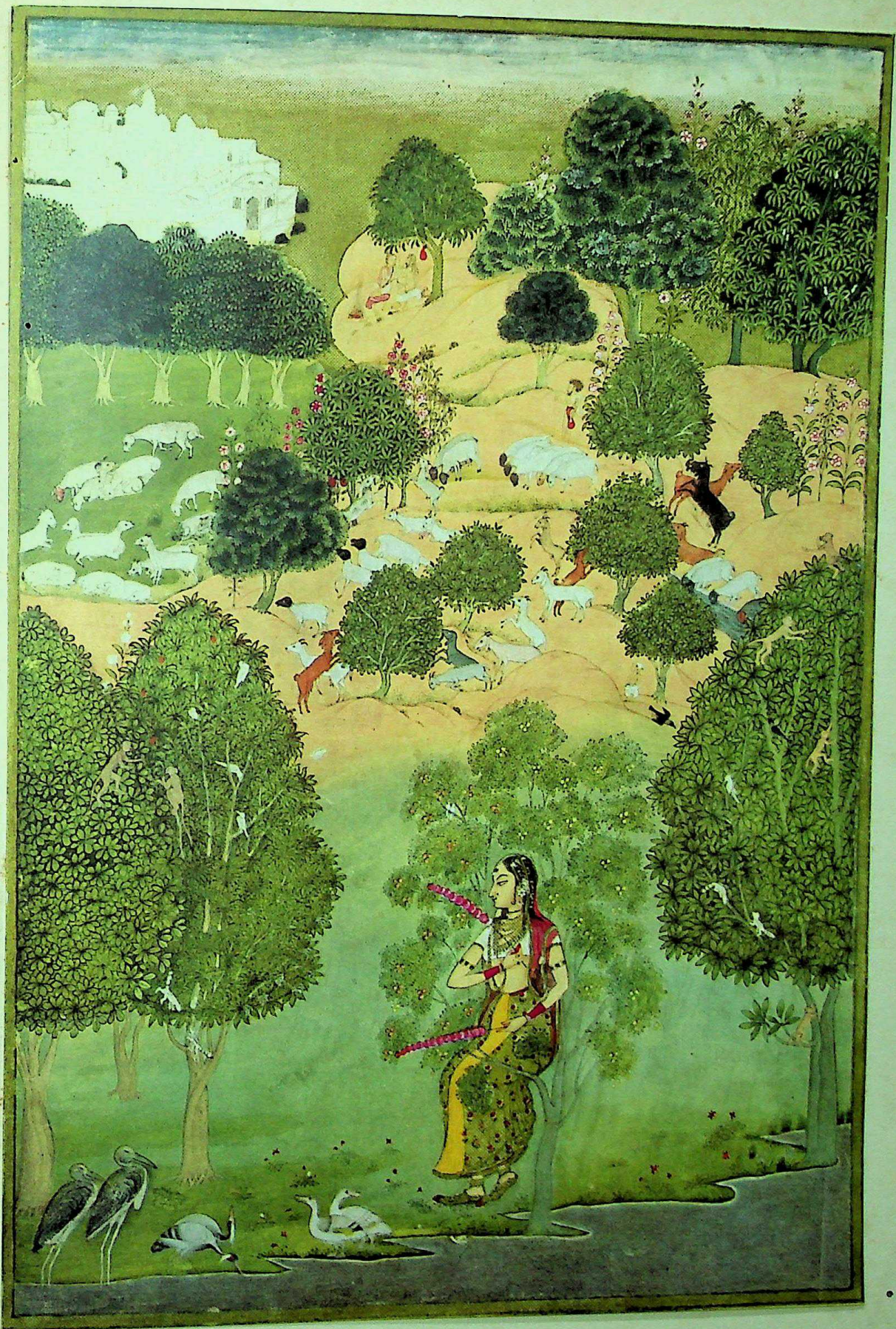
### KAKUBHA RAGINI

*Mid 18th century.*

A spring pastoral scene in which a girl is seated, waiting for her lover. She has put on her finest clothes and made two flower wands to receive him. There is no title or poem, but the sentiment corresponds to that of Kakubha Ragini, of which the essential feature is the gathering of flowers for garlands for the lover.

The painting must have been executed somewhere in Rajputana about 1750, by which date the Mughal terms had become part of the Rajput idiom. The wide prospect survives, but it is piled up so as to fill the picture space, and not to lead the eye outside it. The distant view of a town remains, but it is no longer lost in mist, but clearly defined, though not explicitly related to the rest of the landscape. Indeed the whole surface is treated like a tapestry, with no logical transition from one part to another, no constant view-point nor scale. But a sense of light and air remains in it from the Mughal tradition, and also the delicately featured beauty of the girl. Her arched brow and large almond eye with its downward glance, belong to a style of beauty current in Rajputana about the middle of the eighteenth century. This type reached an extreme development in the painting of Kishngarh, a small state near Jaipur ruled by another junior branch of the Jodhpur Rathors, in the time of Maharaja Sawant Singh who reigned from 1748 to 1757 and then returned to Brindaban to live the life of a Vaishnavite devotee until his death in 1764. He wrote many poems in praise of Radha and Krishna, and his court painter, Nihal Chand, painted for him pictures of these divine lovers (see M. V. Pandia in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. 68, 1897, pp. 63 and 75; and E. Dickinson in *Marg*, IV, 1, 1949).







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